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ABSTRACT

Criteria for the evaluation of study/travel abroad programs for high school students of foreign language originally approved in 1966 by the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages are reevaluated and reexamined in this pamphlet. Guidelines are presented in these areas: (1) selection of students, (2) recruitment of group leaders, (3) operations of sponsoring agency, (4) academic program, and (5) housing and recreation time. (RL)

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GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS ABROAD FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A REAPPRAISAL

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE SUPERVISORS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

1

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Criteria for the evaluation of study/travel abroad programs for high school students of foreign languages were approved in 1966 by the National Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages. Since then new developments have occurred which necessitate revision of the original criteria. New emphases in areas of the overseas programs require a re-examination of previous positions. The Council hopes that the reappraisal of criteria will be of assistance to school district administrators, teachers, parents, and high school students who are faced with decisions involving programs abroad.

It is not the intention of these guidelines to deter parents and students from participating in overseas foreign language programs but to help them be more selective in the choice of such a program. With the great number and variety of opportunities for high school students to travel and study abroad today, it becomes increasingly important for the potential traveler to select the best for his money.

The National Council therefore suggests the following Guidelines for Evaluating Foreign Language Programs abroad for High School Students:

I. Selection of students

A. Screening

Does the sponsoring agency screen the student as to his maturity, character, and health? Who determines that a student can profit from such an overseas experience? Are letters or recommendation from a student's teachers, counselor, or dean required with the application? Is a medical examination required before the student is accepted?

B. Language ability

Has the student ever studied the foreign

language before, will he be able to enter classes for beginners in the foreign country? Is it an economical use of a student's time for him to apply when he has never studied the particular foreign language?

C. Age grouping

Will high school students be mixed with college students and adults who are not staff members?

II. Recruitment of group leaders (chaperones, counselors)

A. Screening

Does the sponsoring agency screen those who are applying for the position of group leader, chaperone, or counselor or is any adult accepted who recruits a certain number of students? How is a group leader required to substantiate that he possesses good character and is in good health? How is it determined that the adult has the ability to lead, counsel, and chaperone high school students in a foreign environment?

B. Payment of group leader

Is the hiring of the group leader for the overseas assignment based upon his qualifications or is he selected because of his skill in recruiting a certain number of high school students?

C. Ethics

Are teachers adhering to ethics in student recruitment? The teacher's professional relationships with students should not be used for private advantage; the educator neither solicits nor involves students or

their parents for commercial gain.*

D. Language ability and travel experience

Does the group leader, chaperone, or counselor serving in the overseas program possess a command of the foreign language? Has he ever been to the foreign country? For how long? How recently? Under what circumstances?

III. Operations of sponsoring agency

A. Travel and fees

Does the application blank clearly specify what is covered by the total payment and what is not? Are the items listed for which the student will be expected to pay extra?

B. Financial condition of the sponsoring agency

Is the sponsoring agency on a sound financial basis? Will students be stranded overseas as a result of poor financial management of the sponsor?

C. Payment procedures

Is the deadline for full payment required more than three months in advance? How late may cancellation be made without a penalty? Does the sponsoring agency require an application fee which is non-refundable? Is the amount of the fee excessive? Is the total cost of the travel/study program in line with the fees of other sponsoring agencies?

*See National Education Association "Code of Ethics of the Education Profession" adopted July 1968. Principle I 6. In fulfilling his obligations to the student, the educator shall not use professional relationships with students for private advantage.

D. Insurance

Is the student required to carry accident, health, and luggage insurance? Are students who are covered under their parents' policies required to take additional insurance? Students should have insurance protection before leaving on an overseas program.

E. Advertising claims

Are the advertising brochures accurate in describing the accommodations for students? Answers can be obtained from students or group leaders who have previously participated in the program. Does the sponsoring agency guarantee that credit will be given to students who participate in the travel/study program? Credit is normally granted only by the registrar's office in the student's own high school.

IV. Academic program

A. Orientation of the student

Are the objectives of the travel/study program made clear before the student enrolls? Does the program include an orientation course for the student prior to departure for the foreign country?

B. Planning and staffing

Is the program a cooperative effort between a local educational agency (foreign language association, school district, school, etc.) and a sponsoring agency, or is the entire program handled by the sponsoring agency? When the sponsoring agency is responsible for obtaining overseas facilities only and the co-sponsoring local educational group is responsible for

overseas curriculum and staffing, greater local control of the total educational program is possible.

How are staff members selected? What qualifies a person to teach American high school students in an overseas program? Native speakers do not necessarily make the best teachers, but students should have some exposure in classrooms to them. Foreign college professors are not necessarily the best choice since they often do not know how to teach American teenagers according to modern methods.

C. Authority for the overseas academic program

Does the sponsoring agency delegate its authority for the academic program to a foreign school, college, or university and hence surrender its control of the quality of the instruction?

D. Grouping and size of classes

Is placement into classes determined exclusively by a written test when objectives state that conversation is one of the main objectives of the academic program? What will the size of the classes be? Does the academic program provide for beginning, intermediate, and advanced classes? Are students other than Americans also enrolled in the language classes? Are college students enrolled in classes for high school students? Are all students regardless of their fluency in the language placed in the same group?

E. Course content

Are topics of instruction at the interest and maturity level of high school students?

Do the instructional materials used by the students relate to their language ability?

F. Extent of the course

ls sufficient time for classroom instruction provided in the foreign language program? Is daily instruction provided? Are field trips and special events related to classroom instruction or are they added as pure entertainment? Does the student use the foreign language outside as well as inside the classroom?

G. Evaluation

Are pre- and post-instruction tests used to measure what the student has learned? How is the quality and quantity of student learning determined? How is progress in the skills of listening-comprehension and speaking determined?

V. Housing and recreation time

A. Student housing

How far is the students' housing from the classroom? Where is the housing of the chaperones in relation to their student groups? How is it possible for a male group leader to chaperone the girls in his group who are housed in a girls' dormitory? The same question may be asked about female group leaders who are supposed to supervise boys who are housed in a boys' dormitory.

Are the students housed in dormitories or with families? How are the families chosen?

B. Medical staff

What medical services are provided at the overseas campus? Does the sponsoring agency charge students for any of the medical services? Are the medical services available at all times?

C. Free time and chaperonage

How "free" can an American high school student abroad be permitted to be? At what times during the travel/study program will the high school student be on his own (no chaperone)? Blocks of free time for students with little or no supervision present dangers. Does the sponsoring agency assume responsibility for the student during periods of free time?

D. Meals

What is the quality and quantity of the food served? Must the student supplement his inadequate meals with food which he must purchase? Are the meals served in a private dining room, a public cafeteria, or a restaurant?

Supervisors of foreign languages in state departments of education can provide additional suggestions for ways of evaluating programs abroad; they stand ready to help. It is the hope of the Council that the above questions and information will be of assistance to all those who contemplate enrolling in a travel/study foreign language program.

November, 1971